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The decades leading to the Civil War were marked by an increase in political combat between the North and the South over the question of slavery. Territorial expansion and the admittance of new states greatly intensified this battle, causing legislators to argue over the question of whether or not slavery would be allowed to continue westward. In the decade preceding the Civil War, the struggle over the admission of Kansas as a state embodied the South's attempts to utilize the institution of slavery as a political tool to aid in this battle. Southern political forces went to great lengths in their attempt to admit Kansas as a slave state, hoping that the newly created state would increase the South's political potency.

There is much to be considered when defining the "South," given its geographic, economic, political, and cultural diversity. This paper will utilize slavery as a means of determining southern identity, because the institution had geographic, economic, political, and cultural implications. The official slave states by 1860 were Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.[1] These fifteen states were what comprised the South as a factional entity.

Comparatively, the North was a less united entity. Its free workforce was a less systematized economic configuration and therefore required less centralization. As a result, the formation of the North as its own entity was due less to a uniting internal aspect, like slavery, and more to a reaction against an external aspect; the South's political prowess. The official free states by 1860 were California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin.[2] These eighteen states were what comprised the North as a factional entity.

An important factor in comparing the South and the North is the breakdown of their populations and how those populations were represented in Congress. The Three-Fifths Compromise,

which allowed three out of every five slaves to be factored into the population represented in Congress, was established at the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and allowed the lesser populated slaves states to stand up against the North's superior population; and, for many years, the Three-Fifths Compromise leveled the sectional playing field in Congress.[3] Unfortunately for southern interests, the North's population grew at a far greater rate.

In 1790, the South had a total population of 1,961,372 people (free and enslaved), while the North had a population of 1,968,455 people.[4] But following the War of 1812, millions of immigrants poured into the country, most of them into northern port cities like New York and Boston. Meanwhile, many Americans in both the South and the North moved westward into the territories, which was a concern for the South, because its population was not being replenished by European immigration.[5] As a result, by 1850, the South was populated by 9,612,769 people (free and enslaved), while the North was populated by 13,434,922 people. When one detracts the value of the South's 3,200,304 slaves, its free population is revealed to have been 6,412,465; but in terms of political representation, as a result of the Three-Fifths Compromise, approximately 1,920,182 of the slaves were counted as freemen, giving the South an adjusted free population of 8,332,647 people. In comparing the South's adjusted free population to the North's population, one finds that the North still had 5,102,275 more people than the South in 1850. That difference represented roughly sixty-one percent of the South's adjusted free population. Without the Three-Fifths Compromise, the difference would have been roughly 110 percent. However, despite the North's far greater populace, the South stretched over more land, occupying 851,448 square miles, while the North occupied 612,597 square miles, meaning the South controlled roughly fifty-eight percent of the total area of the United States, excluding the territories.[6]

The Three-Fifths Compromise would also greatly alter the Electoral College. In 1852, the South had 120 electoral votes, and the North had 176 electoral votes. Had the electoral votes not taken into account three-fifths of the slaves, the numbers would have been 105 and 191, respectively, thus giving the North even greater representation.[7] One can clearly see the political advantage the Three-Fifths Compromise afforded the South.

Even with this advantage, the North still would have politically overpowered the South much earlier had the political system predating the presidential election of 1860 been purely sectional.

Fortunately for southern interests, the political system since the time of John Adams' presidency had been a non-sectional two-party system, with various political parties taking active, dualistic roles. As a result of the non-sectional party system, sectional issues were less troublesome because voters could channel their sectional anger into a less divisive, non-sectional system capable of compromise.[8] From 1836 to 1852, the Whig-Democrat party system dominated presidential politics.[9] It was under this system that the Slave Power would have its last era of dominance, being able to manipulate the party system in its favor.

The term "Slave Power" is used in this paper to describe an oligarchy of slaveholders who acted in varying forms of unison to control state and national politics to favor their interests. The idea of such a class of men in the United States, trying to limit federal power to favor their own interests, had existed since the debate over the ratification of the Constitution in 1787. Alexander Hamilton, in advocating ratification, wrote of such men, stating their intentions to limit the power of the federal government and describing their desire as:

> the perverted ambition of another class of men, who will either hope to aggrandise [sic] themselves by the confusions of their country, or will flatter themselves with fairer prospects of elevation from the subdivision of the empire into several partial confederacies, than from its union under one government.[10]

Though Hamilton did not specifically name the "Slave Power," he outlined its objective: to make itself more powerful at the cost of the federal government.

In 1850, the number of slaveholders in the South was 346,048; and, of that number, 92,215 owned ten or more slaves. This was a rather small figure in relation to the overall size of the South, but the influence of this class was great. Furthermore, the majority of the South's economy was derived from agriculture. In 1850, the value of the South's agricultural product was $631,277,417, whereas the value of the product of its manufactures was $165,413,027. In the field of agriculture, 3,697,649 people were employed; of that figure, 2,500,000 of them were slaves. This means that sixty-eight percent of those who worked in the most profitable field of the southern economy were slaves.[11] Consequently, slaveholders controlled more than two-thirds of the workforce in the largest sector of the South's economy. This figure taken separately (assuming that each agricultural worker produced the same amount of product) was

larger than the remainder of the value of the agricultural product combined with the value of the industrial product. When one combines the data of the agricultural and industrial products, slaveholders employed in agriculture were directly responsible for at least fifty-three percent of the South's overall economic product, meaning that the slaveholders were clearly the most important figures in the South's economy.

Another important factor in determining the influence of slaveholders can be found in data concerning how political discourse might have been circulated. Census data relating to urbanization, education, the press, and transportation gives a context to the Slave Power's potential to control the southern populace.

Given the lack of an accessible national media, local institutions influenced most voters.[12] In the South, most institutions of political influence were fewer and more disparate than in the North. Cities, for example, were important cultural centers for circulating political debate; but the South was home to very few large cities. In fact, in 1856, census data revealed that there was "less than fifty cities with a population of 3,500" in the South.[13] This meant that southerners were less likely to have strong, nearby cultural centers of political discourse. In relation to education, a strong means by which political debate is advanced, the South had only 18,507 public schools to the North's 62,433; and only 152 public libraries to the North's 1,058. Illiteracy was also high in the South. In 1850, 512,882 illiterate white people lived in the South, or roughly seven percent of the total white population, assuming that the figure representing the number of slaves in the total population remained constant. Also, in 1850, there were 454 political periodicals in the South with a circulation of 413,265 (a figure very close to the number of slaveholders.) Comparatively, the North had 1,160 political periodicals with a circulation of 1,394,582. And another important means of circulating political discourse was transportation. In 1854, the South had 4,212 miles of railroads to the North's 13,105, and 1,116 miles of canals to the North's 3,682.[14]

If one takes all of this information together, one can see that the methods by which political discourse was circulated in the South were minimal and more likely to have been controlled by regional influences, giving much more power to local leaders. Since slaveholders controlled the largest portion of the economy, it can be reasonably assumed that they were able to take advantage of their influential positions and guide their regional masses in a manner that would have been less imaginable in the North.

By whatever method, though representing only a small fraction of the population, slaveholders and their interests were well represented in government. In the executive branch, between the presidencies of Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe, the state of Virginia held sway over the presidency for nearly a quarter century; and, prior to the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, the only presidents to ever serve more than one term (Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Jackson) were slaveholders. In addition, of the fifteen presidents before Lincoln, nine of them were from the South. Many more slaveholders served in Congress, including those who served as Speaker of the House the longest (Henry Clay, Andrew Stevenson, and Nathaniel Macon.) In the judicial branch, the South maintained a strong advantage, as nineteen of the thirty-four Supreme Court Justices before Lincoln were slaveholders.[15] Considering the South's relatively small population when compared to the North, one would assume that the South would not have had such clout in government, but the South was able to maintain great power preceding the Civil War because of its political savvy.

The South's ability to maintain its strength existed in its ability to manipulate northerners. On May 26, 1854, William Seward, a Whig senator from New York, addressed the Senate regarding the upcoming passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. He spoke of the South's ability to maintain its power:

> The great support of Slavery in the South has been its alliance with the Democratic Party of the North. By means of that alliance it obtained paramount influence in this Government about the year 1800 which, from that time to this, with but few and slight interruptions, it has maintained.[16]

The Democratic Party, since the time of Andrew Jackson, required a presidential candidate to have the backing of at least a two-thirds majority of the nominating caucus; and because the South was such an integral element of the party, it would have been impossible for a Democratic presidential candidate to receive the party's backing if he were at odds with the South. Consequently, if a northern Democrat were to have any hope of success in the party, he would have to back the southern agenda.[17] As a result, the South more or less controlled the Democratic Party on the national level.

This organization allowed the South to always fend off threats in Congress. For example, if a bill were presented to Congress opposing the interests of the Slave Power, its un-amended passage

would have been highly unlikely, given that opposition to the bill would have included the entire South (both Whigs and Democrats) and the northern wing of the Democratic Party. In fact, for many years, the only real opposition to the South as a whole was northern Whigs.

This acquiescence, on the part of northern Democrats, made possible the passage of such bills catering to southern interests as the admission of Arkansas as a slave state in 1819, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. As time wore on, however, the South found it more difficult to rely on support from northern Democrats because their staunch support for the South caused them to lose elections. Meanwhile, some northern Democrats felt that they were not adequately profiting from their support for the South since northerners could seldom gain a great deal of power in the Democratic Party.[18] Consequently, by the time the Kansas-Nebraska Bill came to Congress in 1854, the South was in a politically weaker position than it had been in previous decades.

The admittance of new states had long been a difficult subject in antebellum politics. For many years preceding the Civil War, the number of slave states had remained equal to the number of free states. If a new slave state was admitted, it was coupled with a new free state, and vice versa. For example, Alabama offset Illinois; Missouri offset Maine; and Arkansas offset Michigan. By this method, a certain level of sectional equality was maintained in the Senate.[19]

This delicate balance, however, would be undone. As a result of the gold rush of 1849, many Americans flocked to California in search of wealth. The influx of so many people required a territorial government, and Californians drew up a constitution prohibiting slavery. Many of those mining gold wanted to keep slavery out of California, due to racism and fear that slaveholders would take over the mining industry as they had the agricultural industry in the South. As a result, California was admitted as a free state in 1850.[20]

The admittance of California destroyed the balance between the South and the North in the Senate. Consequently, as the 1850s began, there were fifteen slave states and sixteen free states, meaning the balance in the Senate was thirty and thirty-two, respectively.[21] Though the South could often count on the votes of northern Democrats, the idea of this new imbalance prompted efforts to reestablish balance in the Senate.

Meanwhile, in the early 1850s, Congress was pressured to officially organize the remainder of the Louisiana Purchase to allow for settlers. Stephen A. Douglas, a Democratic senator from Illinois serving as the chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories, brought forward a bill in early 1854 organizing the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Prior to this bill, the Missouri Compromise of 1820 had been used to determine the expansion of slavery in the territories. The Compromise stated that slavery would not be allowed in the territories north of the 36°30′ parallel line (the southern border of Missouri.) This statute was intended as a concession to the South from the North, but more than three decades after its passage, the Slave Power was no longer satisfied.

In a move to draw southern Democratic support, Douglas overturned the Compromise of 1820 with his new bill, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which voided the 36°30′ parallel line and stipulated that the people of the territories would decide for themselves the question of slavery via popular sovereignty. As a result of overturning the longstanding Compromise of 1820, the Kansas-Nebraska Act would prove to be very divisive. Many southerners welcomed the bill because it potentially opened up the West for slavery, but many northerners found in it more reason to reaffirm their belief in the existence of the Slave Power controlling national affairs.[22]

When William Seward addressed the Senate in late May of 1854, he had no illusions about the outcome of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Referencing the bill's approaching passage, he lamented, "The sun has set for the last time upon the guarantied [sic] and certain liberties of all the unsettled and unorganized portions of the American continent that lie within the jurisdiction of the United States." He went on to point at the "political equilibrium between the free and the slave States," indicating that the bill could destroy it, giving the South more power and influence over the North. Though Seward's opening statements seem particularly dejected from a northern perspective, his tone would change when speaking of the future.[23]

Fear is what Seward described as the motivating factor in the South's support of the Kansas-Nebraska Act: "Slavery, wherever it exists, begets fear, and fear is the parent of weakness. . . . It is the apprehension that, even if safe now, they [the slave states] will not always or long be secure against some invasion or some aggression from the free States." A primary factor in the fear described by Seward was the increasing political potency of the North. As aforementioned, by 1850, the North's population was

greater than the South's adjusted free population by 5,102,275 people which figures to be sixty-one percent of the South's adjusted free population. Seward cited European immigration as being a primary factor in this force of population that would eventually make slavery obsolete.[24]

Earlier that same year, in the House, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was dividing some southern congressman, sparking disagreements over the meaning of the 1820 Missouri Compromise. Alexander H. Stephens, a Democratic congressman from Georgia, stated that the 1820 Compromise had been only a compact between the federal government and the state of Missouri, and that the slavery-prohibiting effect of the 36°30′ parallel line did not stretch outside of Missouri, meaning that slavery was free to be established in any of the United States' territories. He also stated that the North did not respect the line, as many northern congressmen voted against the admission of Arkansas as a slave state, even though it fell below the line. Citing what he implied to be hypocrisy and dishonesty on the North's part, he felt that the South had no obligation to respect the Compromise of 1820. He went further to identify the northern threat. His reasoning implied, if the North could legislate slavery out of the territories, it could possibly do the same to the South in the future, should it gain the political support of the new states. He made clear his desire to give slavery a chance in the West via popular sovereignty.[25]

Theodore G. Hunt, a Whig congressman from Louisiana, refuted some of Stephens's claims in his speech. He stated that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820 would be a dangerous precedent. It would destroy the good faith in the negotiations and compromises made previously between the South and the North. He also stated that the Missouri Compromise was a "southern measure carried by southern votes," in that many southerners voted in its favor, it respected southern interests, and it created peace between the South and the North. Ultimately, the negation of the Compromise would potentially make any laws or agreements on the books in relation to slavery open to repeal.[26]

With this in mind, Hunt said, "And now, I would ask, what motive has the South to extend the area of slavery within the present limits of the Republic?" Hunt had stated that much of the western territory was unsuitable for southern cash crops that had been used to warrant slavery in the first place. "Why then," he continued, "this lust for new lands not wanted and not capable of being used?" Hunt would answer his own question: "There

are those who desire that the slaveholding States should acquire additional territory, in the belief or hope of effecting and preserving a balance or equilibrium between them and the non-slaveholding States. But this is a vain and delusive hope."[27]

Hunt's assertions implied that the Slave Power sought to continue slavery into new areas of the country, where much of the land would not be hospitable to the institution, for the sake of political gain. In much of the western territory, slavery would not have been of value economically as much as it would have been politically because once slavery was imbedded in a state, that state's society would come to generally revolve around it, therein creating an increase in power and influence for slaveholders. As a result, slavery created a comparatively centralized political system by means of a collective interest based around slaveholders that extended across all slave states. In this sense, the Slave Power was adverse to the South's championed system of politics: states' rights.

Nineteenth-century historian Henry Adams explained the actions of the Slave Power in relation to its supposed support of states' rights:

> Whenever a question arose of extending or protecting slavery, the slaveholders became friends of centralized power, and used that dangerous weapon with a kind of frenzy. Slavery in fact required centralization in order to maintain and protect itself, but it required to control a centralized machine; it needed despotic principles of government, but it needed them exclusively for its own use.[28]

Had states' rights been the real issue in southern politics, Douglas would not have opposed the Mormon settlers' sanctioning of polygamy in the Utah territory, given the fact it was the popular decision of the citizens of that territory.[29] Also, the South's passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which more or less forced northerners to participate in catching fugitive slaves, was hardly an example of states' rights, seeing as it forced northerners to support laws they did not endorse. In short, southern politics did not operate on the idea of states' rights; it operated on the idea of what was best for the Slave Power.

In 1856, the Democratic Party tried to put a bill through Congress bringing in Kansas as a state under the aegis of popular sovereignty; that is, allowing the people of the state to decide on the issue of slavery. However, as the southern rhetoric developed,

it highlighted the importance of slavery to the South more than it championed the idea of states' rights. In the bill, the Democrats deferred guilt on the issue of slavery by stating, "We shall not undertake to determine why the God of nature made the African inferior to the white man; or why He permitted England to fasten the institution of slavery upon the colonies against their repeated and earnest remonstrances." They then added that any attempt by the government to revoke slavery would be in opposition to the Constitution and the political system of states' rights which the Democrats implied was the modus operandi from the nation's beginning.[30] In this argument, the South covered its real intent to expand slavery and shrouded its arguments with support for the Constitution and states' rights, as well as economic factors.

Conversely, John Allison, a Whig congressman from Pennsylvania, attacked the bill and spoke of the question of slavery's expansion:

> I represent a constituency whom to say nothing of the question of humanity, are interested in this question — interested because it is the overshadowing moneyed interest of this country — controlling its Government, dictating its legislation. The vast amount of capital invested in slave property, together with other causes, renders it the most vigilant and sensitive interest ever known to any country.

He would continue to denounce the expansion of slavery as an economic and political weight on the country, as well as a moral weight, adverse to the nation's principles.[31] His statements recognized the political expediency of slavery and how its westward expansion would have further affected national politics.

James A. Stewart, a Democratic congressman from Maryland, through supporting slavery and its westward expansion, verified its strong influence on the economy and politics. He stated, "Such a scheme [abolition] would be utterly destructive to the negro race, and in its results would occasion a fearful paralysis in all departments of trade everywhere, from which, galvanism, nor all the restoratives within reach, could save you." Stewart then tried to turn the tables on the North by stating that the South and the West were natural allies, capable of making the North obsolete. By Stewart's implication, the North was fearful and dependent of the South.[32]

Stewart's implications were weakened by Judah P. Benjamin, a Democratic senator from Louisiana, who maintained an aura of fear

in regards to the North. Benjamin focused more upon the political advantages the North would have if Kansas were simply allowed to be a free state, theorizing that the North would eventually be able to take a decisive political majority and alienate the South from power. He stressed the necessity of keeping a political balance:

> Sir, in every case where the framers of the constitution foresaw any temptation which could induce a majority from one section of the Union to legislate for their own exclusive advantage, they have expressly prohibited such an abuse in order to preserve equality between the States.

He continued by stating that the majority of the South's economy was agricultural and that slaves formed the majority of the agricultural workforce. If slavery were to be excluded from the territories, the South would be economically castrated there. Benjamin then identified what he thought to be the reason behind the North's refusal to adopt the bill:

> The motive is a struggle for power — for political power — for the chance of subverting that equality of the States to which I have adverted . . . The object is to attain such power as shall put these parties in possession of sufficient representation, in both branches of Congress, to change the federal constitution, and to deprive the South of that representation which is already inadequate to protect her rights. [33]

When looking back over the statements of the legislators in relation to this bill, it is interesting to note how much of the focus was upon slavery, its importance to the South, and the ramifications of its prohibition in the West, as opposed to what was supposed to be the official issue behind the bill: states' rights. The southern legislators glossed over the idea of states' rights, veering their arguments more toward protecting slavery, determinedly focusing on its expansion. As aforementioned, the South was less concerned with states' rights and popular sovereignty, focusing on issues more immediate to the Slave Power.

The bill failed to pass. By the time the Democrats tried to push it through Congress in 1856, the United States' political climate had changed. The old non-sectional Whig-Democrat party system was on its last legs. Replacing the Whigs in the two-party system

were the Republicans; and in the presidential election of 1856, it was made clear that the Whig party was a thing of the past. The Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, won the election, scoring 45.3 percent of the popular vote with a total of nineteen states in his pocket and 174 electoral votes; the Republican candidate, John C. Frémont, scored 33.1 percent of the popular vote with a total of eleven states in his pocket and 114 electoral votes; and the Whig-American candidate, Millard Filmore, scored only 21.5 percent of the popular vote with only one state in his pocket and eight electoral votes.[34]

Though the Democrats decisively won the election, the results must have seemed very troubling. Prior to this election, the party system had not been sectional, and the election returns never implied one section of the country was at war with the other. Conversely, the returns of the presidential election of 1856 were very sectional. The entire South, with the exception of Maryland, went to Buchanan; while the North, with the exception of Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, went to Frémont.[35]

The fears expressed by so many southern politicians had come true. The North, with its vastly superior population, had begun to organize itself politically. If things were to continue along this path, many southerners must have thought that the South would be politically overshadowed by the North, ultimately ostracized from power. The South responded in desperation, trying again to politicize the West in its favor by installing slavery as a permanent institution. This time, the doctrine of states' rights was not even used to mask the intentions of the Slave Power.

In 1858, President Buchanan was determined to bring Kansas into the Union as a slave state. He attempted to push a bill through Congress to admit Kansas as a state based upon the Lecompton Constitution, a constitution written and ratified by a group of proslavery men largely unrepresentative of the entire populace, many of whom came from Missouri.[36] This constitution stated that the government "shall have no power to pass laws for the emancipation of slaves without the consent of the owners," and it also stated that the government would have no power to block immigrants to the state who were slaveholders.[37] This attempt represented a complete breakdown of the previous southern rhetoric supporting states' rights.

In the House of Representatives, William Porcher Miles, a Democrat from South Carolina, stated forthright that the issue of the new bill to admit Kansas as a state had nothing to do with

popular sovereignty. He said, "The mind of the whole country has been long distracted by this slavery agitation. It has entered into every political question and it is impossible to disguise the fact that it constitutes the very pith and substance of the contest in which we are engaged." Miles did not even seek to deny the fraud surrounding the Lecompton Constitution; instead, he affirmed them, even implying the coordinated efforts of slave states, led by Missouri, to flood Kansas with proslavery men. He defended cries of foul play from the North by stating, "The question of frauds is a minor one." He reasoned that the real necessity was to maintain a political equilibrium between the South and the North.[38] With Minnesota and Oregon on the verge of being admitted as free states, Porcher was adamant that Kansas enter the Union as a slave state to keep the South a politically active force.[39]

Conversely, Alexander H. Stephens did not affirm the alleged frauds of the Lecompton Constitution and maintained its legitimacy. He argued that the United States Constitution was not ratified by a popular vote, instead by a convention, thus giving legitimacy to the proslavery convention that had ratified the Lecompton Constitution. In making this argument, Stephens was abandoning the past justification of popular sovereignty to reveal the expansion of slavery to be the real agenda of the South.[40]

In accordance with Stephens, Trusten Polk, a Democratic senator from Missouri, denied any corruption in the Lecompton Constitution as well, stating that it was not necessary, given the large number of proslavery men in Kansas. In explaining the North's opposition to the bill, Polk alleged that the Lecompton Constitution's section legalizing slavery was the only reason that there was any controversy at all regarding the admittance of Kansas. His argument ignored the idea of popular sovereignty in the same manner as did Stephens.[41]

James M. Mason, a Democratic senator from Virginia, argued that the North's attempts to exclude slavery from the territories were an effort "to prevent the expansion of political power in the South." His arguments did not deny any fraudulent activity, deferring the guilt of such allegations by claiming similar frauds occurred commonly across the country. In closing, Mason bargained the admission of Kansas as a slave state for the admission of Minnesota as a free state.[42]

The southern arguments for the admission of Kansas as a slave state betrayed the original justification of their argument: popular sovereignty. Both the debate over the Kansas-Nebraska Act and

the Democratic bill to admit Kansas as a state in 1856 attempted to put some focus on what was considered to be the popular will of the would-be citizens of Kansas. The 1858 bill, comparatively, had stripped itself of the façade of popular sovereignty and revealed itself to be the South's expansionist agenda, utilizing slavery as its primary tool.

On the northern side of the argument, in his opening speech before the Senate, William H. Seward, who had become a Republican, gave no pretensions about popular sovereignty. He stated that the conflict "involves a dynastical struggle of two antagonistical systems, the labor of slaves and the labor of freemen, for mastery in the Federal Union. One of these systems partakes of an aristocratic character; the other is purely democratic." The Slave Power, he stated, had controlled the government from the nation's beginning but had begun to be replaced by the ascension of the North as a political entity. He concluded that all civilized nations of the world had abolished or were in the process of abolishing slavery; only the Democratic Party still clung to the institution.[43] In his closing speech, Seward stated that the arguments in the House and Senate had "stripped [the Democrats] bare of all pretences of fairness in the exercise of maintaining [their] own avowed policy of popular sovereignty. [They] will go before the people . . . in the detested character of a party intervening for Slavery against Freedom."[44]

Oliver A. Morse, a Republican congressman from New York, affirmed the idea of the South's former political control of the North by stating, "It has been obvious that, for a long time, the national power has been kept from the North, not by the proper strength of those who kept it, but by political stratagem and management." He continued by adding that the North was overtaking the South in political power and that this caused the South to worry unnecessarily; he added, "there is no contest by the North with the South, though the Southern people persist in assuming there is one."[45]

John A. Bingham, a Republican congressman from Ohio, argued that the forces at work behind the bill to admit Kansas as a state under the Lecompton Constitution were organized and committed to slavery. He stated, "The President and his party not only endorse the Lecompton Constitution, but by argument, by entreaty, and by threat, seek to induce Congress to endorse it, and thereby give to it the sanction and force of law." He continued by citing a claim by a southern senator that his state would secede, should the bill not be passed.[46] Bingham's arguments identify a political agenda at work in the Democratic Party to pass the bill.

The North's arguments, like the South's, were stripped of all pretenses. They focused solely on the political nature of what was at hand: the South's attempt to force slavery into Kansas as a means of keeping the South afloat in terms of political power. Their arguments also recognized that the North was in control politically, evidenced by the fact that the Lecompton Constitution did not pass with the approval of Congress.

The 1850s had seen three major attempts made by the South to use slavery to politicize the West in its favor, starting with the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 and followed by the Democratic bill to admit Kansas as a state in 1856. The Democratic bill to admit Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution in 1858 was the most desperate and last major attempt made by the South to push slavery westward to increase the national influence of the Slave Power. By the time of the Lecompton Constitution, the South's political dominance had been usurped by the North, which had organized under the Republican Party in response to the South's apparent political prowess and control. It was the South's failure to maintain its political superiority in the 1850s that led to a Republican presidential victory in 1860 and the resulting secession of a majority of the southern states, which triggered the Civil War.

Notes

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3 Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 32-39, 69.

4 Henry Chase and Charles W. Sanborn, *The North and the South: A Statistical View of the Free and Slave States* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1856), 7-12, 25.

5 Richards, *Slave Power*, 101-102.

6 Chase and Sanborn, *North and the South*, 7-19.

7 Ibid., 24-25.

8 Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1983), 4.

9 Congressional Quarterly, *U.S. Elections*, 730-34.

10 Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2003), 4.

11 Chase and Sanborn, *North and the South*, 8, 16, 40, 62.

12 Holt, *Political Crisis*, 15.

13 Chase and Sanborn, *North and the South*, 52.

14 Ibid., 71, 103, 110-11.

15 Richards, *Slave Power*, 8-9, 58, 94.

16 William Seward, "Speech of William H. Seward on the Kansas and Nebraska Bill," at the U.S. Congress, Senate, Washington, DC: Buell & Blanchard, Printers, 26 May 1854, 7.

17 Richards, *Slave Power*, 114-15.

18 Ibid., 89-90, 140, 156.

19 Ibid., 49.

20 Ibid., 97-99.

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